

Washington, DC -- Yesterday, U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) voted for, and the House of Representatives passed, bipartisan legislation to expand GI Bill education benefits for veterans and their families, extend unemployment insurance for those displaced by the recent economic downturn and protect health insurance benefits for low-income families.

“This legislation will ensure that our nation’s veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan can attend college and provide for their families,” **Arcuri said**. “This legislation represents a bipartisan agreement to fulfill our nation’s domestic priorities by protecting Medicaid benefits and extending unemployment insurance benefits for those seeking jobs.”

More than 11,894 brave men and women from New York are currently deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan. Unfortunately, current GI Bill benefits pay only about 70 percent of the cost for a public college education and 30 percent of a private college education for these veterans when they return home. Resident tuition in New York has increased by over \$1,300 since the 2000 to 2001 school year. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, there are currently 15,201 GI students in New York.

This expanded GI Bill would restore full, four-year college scholarships to veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars to help make them part of an economic recovery like the veterans of World War II. The legislation would also allow veterans to transfer those benefits to family members.

The Fiscal Year 2008 Supplemental Appropriations bill (H.R. 2642) also includes provisions to provide a 13 week extension of unemployment benefits for those workers who are unable to find a job in today’s struggling economy.

“Americans don’t want a handout – they want a fair opportunity to find work,” **Arcuri said**. “It is unacceptable that we have so many unemployed in this country, but we can’t expect someone looking for a job to feed their children without any income whatsoever. Extending these benefits helps families and the economy.”

To protect local Medicaid services, H.R. 2642 would place a moratorium until April 1, 2009 on

six Administration-imposed Medicaid regulations. These regulations slash federal Medicaid funding to states for vital healthcare programs and services by billions of dollars over the next five years, jeopardizing services and protections for millions of vulnerable beneficiaries, as well as endangering critical safety net institutions in states that are financially strapped. These regulations would particularly harm children and their access to health care – with 30 million children currently dependent on the Medicaid program.

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